

THE INCLUSIVE WORKPLACE



FLEXIBLE WORKPLACE

WELCOME TO THE INCLUSIVE WORKPLACE SERIES

CREATED BY THE GENDER & DIVERSITY PROGRAM IN COLLABORATION WITH THE CGIAR CENTERS OF THE CONSULTATIVE GROUP ON INTERNATIONAL AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH (CGIAR).

WHAT IS IT?

It's a set of papers which contains our best recommendations for diversity policies and practices we consider essential for good people management, with a special focus on the CGIAR, a global organization with 8,000 staff members from 100 countries. It is designed to help us all create the best possible workplaces built on the core values of inclusion, dignity, wellbeing and opportunity.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

All papers are made up of different areas:

- ✓ Intro: a brief overview on why this topic is important for an inclusive workplace and an outline of the content offered;
- ✓ Model Policy: an example of policy language ready for adopting or adapting into your organization's personnel manual;
- ✓ Practices: a series of related good practices; and
- ✓ Tips and Tools: examples and ideas for implementation.

WHY HAVE IT?

Diversity is a core competency for CGIAR Centers. All Centers are global organizations, and all have multicultural workforces. Centers' ability to manage, develop and leverage diversity obviously is important to their internal effectiveness. However diversity skills are also critical to Centers' effectiveness in working with partner organizations and the end-users of the knowledge and technologies they develop. Therefore everything Centers do to become better at working with diversity will affect their success in meeting their fundamental objectives of fighting hunger and poverty. We hope this resource will facilitate their ongoing efforts to become even more effective.

WHO IS IT FOR?

The Inclusive Workplace has been developed for senior management, staff and HR people across the CGIAR. However, in the same way that the CGIAR shares its scientific and development knowledge, we also wish to share our ideas for managing and developing global diversity with the broader community.

Senior management

Senior management across Centers are continually reviewing their people management and development practices, to optimize their Centers' ability to sustain and enhance a workplace of innovation. Associated with that aim is enhancing Centers' ability to attract, develop and retain a committed and highly productive workforce. This resource center provides a portfolio of ideas to facilitate that ongoing process. Some of the ideas have already been implemented by some Centers, and various sections of this resource center highlight those initiatives.

Staff

Staff at all levels are confronted by issues affecting the way we manage our people: "How do I draft a recruitment advertisement?", "How do I handle being harassed?", "How can I learn more about HIV/AIDS?", and "How do I cope with being so overloaded at work that my home life suffers?" In many cases their Center may have expert advice/information available to staff through its personnel policy manual or other staff bulletins. But in some cases there are gaps, or the information is difficult to access. The Inclusive Workplace is another source of ideas.

HR people

When senior management decide to enhance one of its people management practices, it usually falls to HR staff to draft a policy or practice. However it is quite challenging to turn a concept into an everyday practice. It is also difficult to find the time when, for most HR people, dealing with day-to-day operational issues inevitably has to take priority over policy development. It is generally much easier to adapt a policy that already exists than to create one on a clean sheet of paper. Consequently this resource center should ease the burden of policy development for HR people. One of the many strengths of the CGIAR system is the extent of sharing between HR people across the CGIAR Centers of ideas, practices, policies and knowledge. This resource should facilitate even more sharing.

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY "MODEL" POLICIES?

It is not intended that every organization adopt all of the model policies precisely as described in The Inclusive Workplace. The term "model" policy has been used to describe policies which reflect good practice both in managing diversity and managing people generally. The model policies have also been developed in the context of the CGIAR Centers, i.e. recognized good practice has been adapted to the CGIAR environment. However in many cases the model policies may need to be further adapted to the individual Center's environment and needs, and integrated where appropriate with your organization's existing policies.

Vicki Wilde

Leader

CGIAR Gender & Diversity Program

THE INCLUSIVE WORKPLACE SERIES INCLUDES:

- ACCOMMODATING SPOUSES/PARTNERS
- FLEXIBLE WORKPLACE
- RECRUITMENT
- HARASSMENT AND DISCRIMINATION
- HIV AND AIDS

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INTRODUCTION

This section deals with the following key issues:

- what defines a flexible workplace
- why a flexible workplace is important for inclusion
- why a flexible workplace is particularly important for CGIAR Centers
- what CGIAR Centers need to achieve flexibility
- what these guidelines provide (model policy, sample practices, and tips and tools for implementation)

THE GENDER AND DIVERSITY PROGRAM (G&D) recognizes that many Centers in the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) already have initiated flexible workplace practices. However, these practices often do not cover the scope of issues that need to be dealt with in today's competitive world of scientific research. Some are not as relevant to contemporary workplace issues as they might be or may lag behind those of organizations competing with us for skilled and motivated staff. Recognizing this, G&D has developed these guidelines to assist CGIAR Centers in refining their existing practices.

These guidelines include a model policy ready to be adapted or adopted by the Centers as well as related sample practices, and tips and tools. All are linked to make it easy for you to tap into our best recommendations for improving workplace flexibility. Many Centers contributed their best practices to help us develop these guidelines.

WHAT IS A FLEXIBLE WORKPLACE?



A flexible workplace is a work environment with:

- flexi-place: flexibility of work location
- flexi-time: flexibility of hours worked during the day
- flexibility of days worked during the week, month or year
- flexi-job: part-time as well as full-time employment shared positions

WHY IS A FLEXIBLE WORKPLACE IMPORTANT FOR INCLUSION?

1 Very few organizations have a totally homogeneous workforce. In addition to staff members coming from diverse origins and gender, they also will be at different points in their life cycles. This life-cycle diversity can include marital or partner status, degree of family commitment and levels of continuing education and career development. Not surprisingly, CGIAR Centers work with this multi-dimensional diversity every day and it must be factored into an understanding of staff composition.

Who works in CGIAR Centers?

CGIAR staff members can be:

- expatriates and nationals of the country where the office is located;
- women professionals and para-professionals;
- sole parents;
- engaged in ongoing formal study, part-time or changing from full-time to part-time study and then re-entering the workforce;
- mothers caring for infants;
- caring for school-age children;
- caring for elderly parents;
- caring for sick family members;
- living far from their partners or children;
- involved in broader community responsibilities;
- working with information and communication technology that no longer restricts work to the official workplace.

2 It is obvious that a single, inflexible workplace policy might exclude any one of the categories above. For example, a person wishing to commence part-time study for an advanced degree might be required to attend university one afternoon a week. However, if the Center maintains inflexible working hours (e.g. 8:00-17:00, Monday through Friday), a conflict will arise. The staff member will have to

abandon her/his study aspirations or find a new employer.

3 Assuming the employee is valued and the employer is providing an interesting job, both parties will lose no matter which option is adopted. However this conflict can be avoided if the Center's policy includes flexibility in working hours.

4 Now, consider an even more complicated situation – a staff member who is a single parent caring for school-age children wants to study for a higher degree. What flexibility will she/he need, in terms of juggling working hours and location, in order to manage these responsibilities along with work responsibilities?

5 These are just two examples of the need to recognize the complexity of workplace issues in terms of staff members' life cycles. People's lives change continuously and consequently they need different types of flexibility at different times in their lives. Their work, geographic locations, study commitments, and family and community responsibilities are different from those they had five years ago and probably will be different again in another five years. The combination of factors that emerges when combining life-cycle and workforce issues is incredibly complex. G&D has developed a "life-cycle slide rule" to illustrate to both

management and individual staff members some of the innumerable combinations possible.

The Life-cycle Slide Rule

(You can double-click on the image to see the presentation)

CAREER	Junior role	Senior role	Expert	Management	Leadership
WORK LOCATION	Home country	Far from home: good professional facilities, family services, medical services, etc...	Far from home: marginal professional facilities, family services, medical services, etc...		
FAMILY LOCATION	Family members located in same country		Family members located in different country		
STUDY	Under-graduate	Graduate	Post-graduate	Specialized short-course development	Professional development
FAMILY RESPONSIBILITIES	Single, unattached	In relationship	Nursing infant	Raising small children	Caring for elderly parents
EXTENDED FAMILY/ COMMUNITY	Responsibilities for extended family		Developing community responsibilities		Volunteer activities

7

Imagine a slide rule for depicting how you balance such factors as career mobility, work location and family responsibilities. You can find your own situations on each of these slides, adjust them laterally against the cursor and then think about the following:

- how would you adjust each slide for your work, study and family situation?
- was that a simple exercise or did you have to juggle two or more points on some slides?
- what are the implications for the workplace flexibility you need?
- will your slides change position in two years? in five years?
- how does your life-cycle slide rule compare with others on your team?

6 Although many more slides could be added, the range of issues on the life-cycle slide rule has been simplified for the sake of illustration. Yet, just considering these six slides gives more than 2,000 possible combinations of options. It is inconceivable that a fixed set of employment conditions will accommodate all of them.

7 Standardized (inflexible) workplace practices do not readily accommodate this diversity of pressures, roles, commitments and preferences. Rules can be bent, adapted or even ignored in some situations, especially if the staff member has a supportive supervisor. But what if the staff member doesn't have a supportive

supervisor? And even if she/he has a supportive supervisor, she/he may feel guilty about not making the same contribution as her/his team colleagues.

8 So, why is a flexible workplace important? Quite simply because it facilitates inclusion.

ALERT

- ✓ Flexibility facilitates inclusion.
- ✓ Inflexibility leads to exclusion.

CAUTION

Question your Center's inclusion or exclusion workplace policy.

- ✓ Does your Center's workplace policy genuinely include all staff members as they move through different phases of their lives?
or
- ✓ Does your Center progressively exclude some staff members or make their lives more difficult than necessary?

WHY IS A FLEXIBLE WORKPLACE PARTICULARLY IMPORTANT FOR CGIAR CENTERS?

8

9 A flexible workplace generally provides a competitive advantage. Offering flexible working conditions can enhance a Center's ability to recruit and retain good people, as opposed to organizations that do not offer flexible working conditions.

10 Many progressive organizations have implemented flexible workplace policies and, consequently, a Center that lacks them risks its performance. CGIAR Centers require extensive duty travel or long working hours which interfere with other life obligations. Centers should make every reasonable effort to compensate staff for these work requirements.

"If we've been away for work for many weekends or had to miss many school events because of office meetings, we should be able to take time off to see a school performance or volunteer at the school during a weekday without taking vacation for it."

(CGIAR Program Leader)

Potential consequences of inflexibility

11 CGIAR Centers generally spend quite a bit of time and money recruiting specialized managers and leaders to staff positions. But, if the specialists have life-cycle changes that need to be dealt with and their Centers cannot accommodate those changes, the specialists may have no option other than to leave.

12 If this happens, it may lead to a significant loss of organizational effectiveness while a successor is recruited. There also may be significant turnover costs, particularly if international recruitments are involved.

13 The same scenario applies to several categories of support staff whose scientific, technical or administrative qualifications and training are in high demand in the countries where their jobs are located. Consequently, the availability of flexible working conditions can be critical to retaining valuable people.

Impact on productivity

14 Flexible working conditions tend to stimulate higher productivity because they allow staff members to work:

- where they can be most effective (through flexi-place policies);
- when they can be most effective (through flexi-time policies); and
- how they can be most effective (through flexi-work policies).

These flexi policies are designed specifically to minimize distractions of personal and family issues. The only exception to the rule about stimulating higher productivity occurs, as would be expected, when a staff member elects to transfer from full-time to part-time employment.

Special significance of the flexible workplace to the CGIAR Centers' core business

15 For science organizations such as the CGIAR Centers, a flexible workplace has a special, additional impact. A flexible work environment is more likely to stimulate innovation.

16 If a Center has invested considerable time, effort and money and hired staff members largely for their innovation and creativity, it doesn't make a lot of sense to constrain them to inflexible work environments.

ALERT

People rarely get bright ideas when they're stressed.

Innovation stems from developing novel solutions by making unexpected connections among different – often unrelated – pieces of information. It is often associated with spontaneous creativity.

However, when staff members are preoccupied with battling traffic to get to the office, collecting children from school on time, living away from their families, finding time to care for sick relatives or face the distractions of a noisy office when they are trying to concentrate on serious writing for research projects, the distractions of banal necessities can add a level of stress. This stress inhibits reflective – often sub-conscious – brain processes that stimulate spontaneous creativity and thus innovation. Consequently it makes sense for organizations – particularly science organizations – to find ways to minimize stress in order to facilitate creative and innovative thought processes among staff.

17 The CGIAR needs innovation from its scientists and researchers but also from its professional and technical support staff. Improving the effectiveness and efficiency of the entire organization requires innovation across all corporate services.

18 Thus, flexible workplace policies that enhance individual productivity and at the same time improve a Center's ability to retain that person in the longer term are classic "win-win" policies.

ALERT

Time to update workplace practices developed half a century ago.

Many of today's conventional working practices were developed more than 50 years ago. In those years, the typical employment situation was characterized by standardized and regimented:

- ✓ working hours,
- ✓ holidays,
- ✓ workplaces

In addition, the typical staff member (in a developed country):

- ✓ was male,
- ✓ had a wife who stayed home to raise their children,
- ✓ had completed his education,
- ✓ worked most (if not all) his life for the same employer,
- ✓ had to work in an office or factory environment in order to have access to tools of his trade,
- ✓ lived close to the office or factory with minimal commuting required, and
- ✓ was judged on hours worked and loyalty to the company rather than by impact on achieving longer-term objectives.

10

WHAT DO CGIAR CENTERS NEED TO ACHIEVE FLEXIBILITY?

19 CGIAR Centers need a genuinely inclusive workplace. This means they need specific employment policies and practices appropriate to support the work and lifestyles of development-oriented science organizations in developing countries in the twenty-first century.

ALERT

Flexible working conditions are not just for women.

It is easy to fall into the trap of assuming that flexible working conditions are primarily for women to balance work responsibilities with caregiver responsibilities for infants and small children.

In reality, today's CGIAR has more men than women enjoying benefits such as flexi-time and telecommuting. The reasons include professional development, need for concentration on writing projects or family needs.

20 A genuinely inclusive workplace draws no distinction among staff categories (internationally, regionally or nationally recruited) in terms of providing access to flexible working conditions.

ALERT

Ensure that flexible working conditions are equitable.

Many Centers currently exercise flexibility in working times and allow staff to work from home or other locations. However this flexibility – particularly where no formal policy exists – often is restricted to researchers or internationally-recruited staff. In an inclusive workplace, these opportunities, just like the six dimensions of the life-cycle slide rule, should apply to all staff.

The flexibility of flexible practices

21 In designing flexible work practices, one size definitely does not fit all. Flexible practices can be exercised in a variety of ways. For example, the sample practice dealing with flexi-place (alternative work locations) explains how this practice can be implemented on several scales:

- small-scale flexi-place – occasional short periods (a few days or even a few weeks) of working from home or an alternative location, for example, to complete special writing projects;
- medium-scale flexi-place – regularly scheduled work times outside the office (one or two days each week);
- large-scale flexi-place – lengthy periods (a few months or, possibly, a year), for example working from a different country to accommodate exceptional personal situations.

22 One extreme offers occasional, short-term access to the flexible practice and the other offers lengthy periods of ongoing access. One situation might require creating “space” for a staff member to take a sick child to the doctor during working hours while another might require a workable opportunity for a staff member to live with a sick child requiring lengthy medical treatment in a different country.

ALERT

The work-life pressures of many staff members can be significantly eased with occasional access to a particular flexible work practice.

WHAT DO THESE GUIDELINES PROVIDE?

Model policy

23 The flexible workplace Model Policy contains a suggested policy statement that can be included in the Center’s Personnel Policy Manual (PPM). It comprises a statement of broad policy together with a list of six flexible workplace practices. These practices are presented as options – the list is neither the minimum acceptable nor the maximum possible. Centers designing their own policies can either establish an ongoing Center-wide policy or set up a trial activity, either

across the entire Center or in specific geographic locations. Also, Centers should identify any flexible workplace practices that can be applied effectively to enhance the flexibility of their unique workplace situations.

Sample Practices

24 The flexible workplace sample practices include:

- ✓ managing benefits and risks of the flexible workplace
- ✓ role of senior management
- ✓ role of line managers
- ✓ role of HR
- ✓ flexi-place
- ✓ flexible work hours
- ✓ flexible yearly periods
- ✓ compressed work schedules
- ✓ part-time employment
- ✓ shared positions

Tips and Tools

25 The flexible workplace tips and tools include:

- ✓ model administrative arrangements for flexi-place
- ✓ model administrative arrangements for flexible work hours
- ✓ tips for working at home
- ✓ good resources on flexibility

12

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In developing these guidelines, we drew extensively on a report commissioned by the CGIAR Gender & Diversity Program from Norman Broadbent Ltd:

“Work Life Balance across Cultures: Developing Model Policies and Recommended Practices” (Maureen Powell, unpublished draft, 2005).

We also referred to G&D Working Paper No. 18: “Toward Gender Equity: Model Policies” (Joan Joshi, Elizabeth Goldberg, Sara J. Scherr, Deborah Merrill-Sands, 1998).

A number of CGIAR Centers shared their policy material dealing with flexible workplaces which helped us refine the material presented in this section of the Inclusive Workplace e-Resource Center. We particularly thank Fabiola Amariles (CIAT) and Ruth Meinzen-Dick (IFPRI) for their critical review and suggestions for improving the final draft.

We found excellent material about flexible workplace issues, particularly about implementing flexible work practices, at the Web site operated by Flexibility Ltd.: www.flexibility.co.uk/flexwork. We also found very useful information in a paper published by WFD Consulting: “When the Workplace is Many Places: The Extent and Nature of Off-Site Work Today”, by Amy Richman, Karen Noble and Arlene Johnson.

This project could never have been realized without G&D's creative teamwork. Bob Moore worked with me for content, while Nancy Hart, Joanne Morgante and Roberto Magini worked with me for editing, design and programming. I sincerely thank each for their artistry and sincere dedication to inclusion.

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MANAGING BENEFITS AND RISKS

COMPONENTS OF THE FLEXIBLE WORKPLACE

1 In these guidelines, “flexible workplace” refers to a work environment in which staff may have access to working arrangements that include:

- **flexi-place:** flexibility of the staff member’s location – practices such as working from home or from an alternative office;
- **flexi-time:** flexibility of the hours, days or months worked by full-time staff each year – practices such as flexible work hours or flexible yearly periods and compressed work schedules;
- **flexi-job:** flexibility to work other than full-time – practices such as part-time employment and shared positions.

2 This list is not exhaustive. In fact, it is just a start. Centers may want to introduce many more options for practices that suit their unique circumstances.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS?

Benefits for Centers

3 Productivity is usually enhanced by the introduction of flexible working conditions, although the overall benefits to the organization will tend to be realized in the long term. In the short term, there may be a slight fall in productivity as new work practices are piloted and refined.

The work itself still gets completed. It simply takes place:

- *in a different location* than the staff member’s usual workplace (flexi-place);
- *at different times* than conventional working hours (flexi-time);
- *in different ways* than conventional full-time employment (flexi-work).

5 In some cases, staff members’ flexible working arrangements will be an ongoing feature of their employment. In other cases, the flexible working arrangements will be for a specific period, designed to accommodate particular life-cycle issues, such as the need to:

- engage in academic studies;
- care for an infant;
- care for a sick family member, possibly requiring travel to another country.

6 The single exception to the rule about improving productivity is when changing from full-time to part-time employment. However, even in some of these

situations, effectiveness is actually improved, even though the overall volume of work output is reduced. Part-time staff often become brilliant time managers, expert at juggling work, family responsibilities, study and other commitments.

7 Consequently the Center benefits because:

- the required work is still undertaken, probably more effectively than under rigid employment conditions, and
- the Center optimizes its ability to attract and, particularly, retain good staff who would have to look for another employer if their circumstances did not allow them to work within rigid traditional employment practices.

8 It is important to note that many Centers already have implemented some of these practices and also have developed skills necessary for supporting a flexible workplace. Practices such as flexi-place generally have been implemented only on an individual, temporary basis for specific staff members in specific circumstances.

9 The most common application of flexi-time is for scientists and researchers who need time and space to concentrate on writing. There are also success stories from Centers that have approved the arrangements for up to a year, or even ongoing arrangements. The Centers' willingness and preparedness to apply flexibility have been critical to their ability to retain valuable staff. Their next challenge will be to scale up – to think in terms of flexible work opportunities for other staff categories.

ALERT

We already have the skills needed for a flexible workplace!

Most Centers already manage global teams dispersed across geographic locations and time zones. They need only apply the same type of management techniques to staff members working with flexi-place or flexi-time arrangements.

Benefits for staff

10 For staff members, the principal benefit of a flexible workplace is being able to organize their work in a way that reduces distractions caused by studies, family or community commitments, or the distractions of their workplace.

11 Flexible working arrangements also offer staff members possibilities of:

- reducing their costs for childcare, transportation or other daily work-related expenses;
- reducing their commuting time;
- avoiding the necessity of taking a religion-based holiday that is irrelevant to their personal beliefs;
- having the right to take leave for religious observances that are not accommodated by the Center's official holidays;
- extending their period of leave for annual holidays (e.g. by electing not to take religious holidays and adding those days to their annual leave).

WHAT ARE THE RISKS? TO THE CENTER? TO THE STAFF MEMBER?

Risks to the Center

12 While personal productivity of individual staff members may be enhanced, their absence from the normal workplace or during normal hours may have a negative impact on team productivity. It also may be difficult to provide flexible workplace arrangements for staff who provide routine services throughout the day, such as security or library staff. Managers may need to impose special requirements on arrangements for staff with significant interaction with partner organizations.

13 The timing of meetings becomes an important issue when flexible working hours are introduced. Routine meetings should be scheduled during core hours as a matter of good management. However, there always will be all-day meetings or seminars and presentations that cannot be accommodated in core hours. Consequently, staff members working with flexible arrangements need to exercise some flexibility too and do their best to attend key events.

14 Many potential risks can be overcome with some lateral thinking. Where Centers have established effective planning and performance management systems, many of the obvious risks are minimized through having agreed action plans, deliverables and deadlines.

ALERT

“The expectation to have key staff always on hand can be indication of a disorganized work culture, where managers spend their days being reactive and solving problems that wouldn’t arise if work were properly managed.”

(from “Being an e-manager”, Flexibility Ltd., www.flexibility.co.uk, the online journal of flexible work)

15 In the short term, adopting flexible working practices may cause a slight reduction in overall productivity while managers adjust their unit work plans, service delivery plans, etc., to accommodate the new arrangements. However this is a transitional, short-term cost and is more than compensated by longer-term productivity.

16 There is also the risk of staff abusing the system. This risk is covered by:

- introducing flexible practice on a trial or pilot basis, and
- dealing promptly and decisively with delinquent behavior.

Risks to the staff member

17 Staff members with flexible working arrangements risk becoming “invisible” if they work at different locations or in different time periods than their colleagues. This can be reflected in three ways.

18 First, staff members with flexible working arrangements may receive less detailed guidance from their supervisor and be less involved with their colleagues because they have less face-to-face time. Because they are not seen “starting early and finishing late”, they may be perceived as less committed than colleagues who choose to work long hours at the office.

19 This risk is especially evident during annual staff evaluations. If staff members with agreed flexible working arrangements are assessed in the context of the Center’s “conventional” arrangements, the evaluation may be distorted to the staff member’s disadvantage.

20 These risks are minimized if Centers have established effective performance management systems. When there are agreed action plans, deliverables and deadlines, evaluations are based on results rather than working patterns.

21 Second, staff members with flexible working arrangements typically have less interaction with their colleagues. This is particularly true of informal interaction where they would share key or peripheral information about their projects or about impending organizational changes (including “office politics”). These risks can be managed by scheduling regular visits interspersed with good use of the telephone and e-mail.

22 Third, in some countries, flexible working arrangements (e.g. transferring from full-time employment to part-time) may significantly compromise a staff member’s employment benefits.

17

Potential logistical problems

23 Depending on the nature and duration of the flexible practices agreement between a Center and staff member, a range of logistical issues needs to be addressed. For example, will a staff member at an alternate location need:

- a computer? If so, who is going to provide it?
- Internet access? If so, who is going to provide it?
- online access to e-mail, or to Center databases?
- to make expensive/long-distance telephone calls?

All of these issues have ramifications in terms of technical input required, costs, security of databases and need for special approval.

24 These issues usually will present no problems for a staff member working from home (e.g. writing a report or technical paper) for a few days or for part of a day every week.

25 Some Centers have agreed on arrangements that allow the staff member to relocate to a different site, thousands of kilometers away, for several months. This latter arrangement is actually creating an alternative, full-time work location, and the costs can be quite substantial. In every approved case, the benefits have been assessed as outweighing the costs. Nevertheless it would be foolish to ignore the potential for some flexible work arrangements to be accompanied by significant financial costs.

HOW CAN WE MANAGE THE RISKS?

Managing risks to the Center

26 It is important to recognize that the policies that underpin these working arrangements are **discretionary**. They are not entitlements, such as having a certain number of days for holiday leave each year. Instead, the policies typically:

- may be applied only with management's specific approval;
- may be determined on a case-by-case basis; and
- may have specific conditions associated with them.

27 Consequently, a flexible working arrangement for any staff member may be set up with controls such as special reporting arrangements, and they may be rescinded if the arrangements prove unworkable or are abused.

28 It may also be advisable to implement such policies on a trial or pilot basis such as an 18-month trial with its first evaluation (of a specific location or a specific work group) after 12 months. That way, by the time the trial ends, the management can use evaluation results to determine whether to:

- confirm the policy by transforming it into a permanent Center employment policy; or
- modify the policy to accommodate any problems experienced during the provisional period.

Managing risks to the individual

18

29 The single greatest risk to staff members is in the context of annual performance evaluations. Staff members can help lessen the risk by prefacing their summary of achievements with a reminder of the agreed flexible working arrangements. In the case of reduced work hours, the agreement should include an explicit list of those things that will no longer be done or will be done by others.

30 In order to overcome the consequences of less interaction with their professional colleagues, staff members working away from their normal work location or working non-conventional hours might need to be more pro-active in sustaining communication. This can include programming telephone conversations, e-mails and special visits to balance the lack of informal workplace contacts.

31 If staff members' salaries or benefits will be reduced by adopting flexible work arrangements, the Center must determine the extent of reduction and advise them beforehand, both in person and in writing, of the consequences.

ALERT

- ✓ flexible workplace policies should only be taken up at the initiative of the individual staff member.
- ✓ it is not appropriate for management to enforce flexible workforce practices arbitrarily, e.g. when faced with a funding shortfall crisis. In

such circumstances, the arrangements for accommodating the crisis should be negotiated with staff in the normal manner for such events.

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THE ROLE OF SENIOR MANAGEMENT

Senior management has responsibility for establishing the policies and practices that :

- facilitate a flexible workplace and
- are appropriate to the Center's work, workforce and geographic locations.

2 These responsibilities include:

- establishing a flexible workplace policy that accommodates the differing work environments of the Center's headquarters and regional and country stations;
- ensuring that new appointees are introduced to the policy during their induction; and
- ensuring that line managers live up to their responsibilities to approve flexible work practices when possible.

ESTABLISHING A CENTER POLICY ON A FLEXIBLE WORKPLACE

3 The model policy provided in these guidelines identifies the key responsibilities of setting up a flexible workplace arrangement, including:

- assuring Center management's commitment to inclusion and to creating a flexible workplace to optimize inclusion;
- defining the range of practices that support the Center's overall flexible workplace policy;
- defining the underlying philosophy, i.e. the practices will be applied if they do not impair long-term Center productivity and where they are considered feasible; and
- encouraging staff to utilize this flexibility when appropriate.

4 The Model Policy's list of six workplace practices is intended as a suggestion and is neither the minimum acceptable nor the maximum possible. Centers may well identify other practices that could enhance their workplace flexibility. They should choose practices that can be applied effectively, either as ongoing, Center-wide policy or as a trial, either across the entire Center or in specific geographic locations.

ENSURING CONTENT AND TIMELINESS OF INDUCTION PROCEDURES

5 The Center procedure for new appointees should ensure that new staff members always have the flexible workplace policy and its options explained to them as part of their induction.

6 In addition, senior management needs to ensure that the policy is communicated across the entire Center, not just at headquarters. This level of education is not difficult to achieve at headquarters but it can be more difficult in relation to appointees at regional and country offices.

REINFORCING LINE MANAGERS' RESPONSIBILITIES

7 It is often easier for a line manager to turn down a staff member's request for flexible working arrangements than to approve it, particularly if:

- other members of the work group will be affected, or
- work plans and work objectives are not well defined in the group, and work is handled on a reactive rather than planned basis.

8 However, if the Center has adopted a flexible workplace philosophy, the line manager is abrogating her/his responsibility by focusing on the obstacles to implementation rather than on the positive benefits. By doing so, the line manager undermines the strategy of inclusion as well as the competitive advantage the Center has set out to establish over other employers.

9 Senior management ensures that line managers are fully aware of the Center's commitment to a flexible workplace and of their responsibilities in creating and sustaining a flexible workplace. This is best done through occasional personal contact from senior managers rather than e-mails, when possible.

10 Line managers certainly need to invest time in planning and facilitating flexible work conditions for individuals or operational groups. However, they also need to understand the risks and costs of not doing so. If staff members resign because their need for flexible working arrangements cannot be met, the time that the line manager will need to spend recruiting a replacement typically will be far greater than that required for planning and facilitating flexible work conditions.

THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF LINE MANAGERS

1 Line managers and supervisors are responsible for promoting a flexible workplace to their staff and facilitating its implementation.

2 Line managers and supervisors are expected to apply both Center policies and the Center's underlying philosophy on flexible working conditions. This includes ensuring that they:

- are personally aware of the various policy options;
- promote these options to their staff;
- take a positive approach to considering staff requests for flexible working conditions; and
- seek advice from the HR Manager about options for accommodating legitimate needs when confronted with a request that has merit but appears not to be covered by existing policies.

ALERT

Don't wait for your staff to beg!

In many cases, requests for flexible working conditions will come directly from the staff member/s concerned – particularly where they are already aware of the Center's policies.

However the line manager should not wait for staff to seek access to these conditions. Instead, an effective line manager should take the initiative to check whether her/his staff might need, or should consider, flexible working conditions, through such opportunities as:

- ✓ discussing individual work plans with new appointees – provides a good opportunity for reinforcing the Center's policy and options;
- ✓ project planning meetings or service planning meetings – provide a good opportunity to enquire whether objectives could be met more effectively if staff considered flexible work options; and
- ✓ annual performance management reviews – provide an opportunity to consider the desirability of flexible work options.

By taking these initiatives, the line manager minimizes the chances that staff members will wait until they are desperate (and less able to present a well-reasoned, objective proposal) before seeking flexibility.

3 The successful application of flexible working conditions usually requires that the Center's work units have reasonable work planning processes in place. A prerequisite for most flexible working conditions is that they do not impair long-term Center productivity. If work in a unit is undertaken essentially on a reactive,

rather than planned, basis, productivity could well be impaired with the application of flexible working conditions.

4 This puts a greater onus on line managers to establish sound planning processes and, perhaps, to apply lateral thinking. This is quite possible even for service units (e.g. purchasing, library) whose day-to-day activities require responding to client needs.

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THE ROLE OF HR

1 The Center's Human Resources group, particularly the HR Manager, has a key role in developing, introducing and sustaining flexible workplace policies. This role includes:

- supporting management in the development of Center policy and practices for flexible working conditions;
- educating staff, particularly during induction, about the availability and application of these practices;
- providing support and guidance to line managers considering requests for flexible working conditions;
- assisting in setting up, monitoring and evaluating pilot practices;
- periodically reviewing the impact and effectiveness of the Center's policy and practices; and
- reporting to senior management with options for future refinements.

SUPPORTING MANAGEMENT IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF CENTER POLICY AND PROCEDURES

2 HR has a key role in developing, reviewing and refining policies and practices and referring them to senior management for decision. The model policy and sample practices provided in these guidelines are designed to aid HR in this function. However, it still remains up to each Center's HR Manager to:

- undertake refinement or revision as necessary for the practices to fit with the Center's operations and the makeup of its workforce across all geographic locations;
- recommend their adoption by senior management and, if revisions to the Center's Personnel Policy Manual are involved, prepare appropriate recommendations to the Center Board; and
- following management approval, incorporate the changes in policy manuals and publicize the changes throughout the Center.

EDUCATING STAFF

3 It is HR's responsibility to ensure that all staff members, irrespective of geographic location, understand not only the policies but the underlying intent of flexible work practices. This role includes advising appointees during induction and reminding all staff of various policy options as their personal or professional circumstances change.

PROVIDING SUPPORT AND GUIDANCE TO LINE MANAGERS

4 HR should work in collaboration with line managers and provide advice and guidance to line managers considering staff requests for flexible working conditions. This is particularly important if there appear to be obstacles to implementing flexible practices or if the staff member's circumstances are not adequately covered by existing policies and practices.

5 It is also important for HR to ensure that workplace flexibility policies are applied not just at headquarters but across the Center's entire spectrum of regional and country offices, no matter how small the group.

REVIEWING THE IMPACT AND EFFECTIVENESS OF CENTER POLICY AND PRACTICES

6 No one is better placed than HR to monitor the impact and effectiveness of workplace flexibility practices, in terms of:

- whether they are right for the Center's (or regional/country station's) circumstances;
- whether they are proving effective in sustaining Center performance;
- whether they are proving effective in fostering inclusion or whether some staff
- whether members are still slipping through policy cracks;
- what obstacles line managers are encountering in approving flexible working conditions;
- how well pilot projects are proceeding; and
- what new personal challenges are emerging for staff members who are not adequately covered by existing policies.

7 Initially, much of this monitoring can be handled informally rather than through structured review. However, as the monitoring proceeds, HR needs to report the outcomes periodically to members of senior management to ensure they are fully informed about successes, failures and future challenges.

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FLEXI-PLACE (ALTERNATIVE WORK-LOCATION)

- 1** Some staff may work more efficiently or experience less conflict between work and their other responsibilities if they can undertake part of their work away from their office location.
- 2** Assignments requiring long periods of concentration, such as data analysis or writing, may be easier to tackle where there is less distraction and interruption than at the office. In addition, reducing commuting time may increase the amount of time and energy staff can devote to work.
- 3** Flexi-place policies that allow for alternative work locations permit staff to schedule either occasional or regular work times outside the office. New information and communication technologies make it possible to access datasets, information sources and people without being at the office. Examples include e-mail, Internet, computers with remote access, video-conferencing and voice mail.
- 4** Unless there are overwhelming reasons to the contrary (e.g. service delivery needs), all employees should have access to flexi-place, i.e. working from home or another alternative location. Requests for approval for working from an alternative location should be dealt with primarily on the basis of feasibility. Nevertheless, there should be clear justification for all requests.
- 5** To be successful, flexi-place arrangements require the staff member and her/his manager to be clear from the beginning about expectations. It is also necessary for the staff member to ensure that all responsibilities will be covered.

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ALERT

Facts about staff members who work from home... and their productivity.

Will a person working at home be less productive because she/he has more distractions than at the office?

“Though interruptions from family are commonly assumed to be a problem for at-home workers, off-site workers actually experience fewer work interruptions than on-site workers, who are frequently interrupted by on-site colleagues.”

(from “When the Workplace is Many Places: The Extent and Nature of Off-Site Work Today”, by Amy Richman, Karen Noble and Arlene Johnson; WFD Consulting)

Flexi-place can be implemented in a variety of scenarios:

- small-scale flexi-place – might involve occasional short periods (a few days or even a few weeks) of working from home or another alternative location (e.g. to write up material for a specific report or scientific paper);
- medium-scale flexi-place – might involve regularly scheduled work times outside the office (e.g. one or two days per week); and
- large-scale flexi-place – might involve lengthy periods (a few months or even a year) working from a different country to accommodate special personal situations, such as to permit the staff member:
 - ✓ an extended visit with a spouse who does not live at a Center location,
 - ✓ to live with a child requiring lengthy medical treatment in a different country.

7 Another example of a large-scale flexi-place arrangement involves allowing a staff

DEVELOPING A POLICY FRAMEWORK FOR IMPLEMENTING FLEXI-PLACE

8 The development of a flexi-place (alternative work location) policy would normally be guided by the following basic principles.

Access to flexi-place

9 Unless there are overwhelming reasons to the contrary (e.g. service delivery needs), the policy should provide all employees with access to flexi-place. Requests for approval for working from home or other alternative locations should be dealt with on the basis of feasibility. Nevertheless, there should be clear justification for all requests.

Options for working from home/alternative location

10 Several options exist for working from home/alternative location. These typically will be defined with the following dimensions:

- the length of time each day to be spent out of the office: this should be an agreed part of every day (which may include the whole day);
- the period for which these arrangements are approved: this can range from a few days to a number of weeks or even be approved on an on-going basis;
- the period/frequency for which the staff member is required to visit her/his official duty station: this can be the number of hours per day or days per week or month, to attend specific meetings, etc.; and
- responsibilities for communication while at the alternate workplace, such as being reachable via phone or e-mail.

Typical circumstances justifying working from home/alternative location

11 Working from home/alternative location may be considered in circumstances such as when:

- the nature of the staff member's current task requires considerable concentration in an environment that will allow uninterrupted work;

- a staff member needs to accommodate a short-term personal/family need;
- a staff member needs to accommodate a long-term personal/family need;
- a staff member is physically unable to get to work;
- a staff member is undertaking a return-to-work program following medical treatment; or
- a staff member's absence from her/his normal workplace (except in the case of accident/injury or return-to-work program) will not unduly affect productivity.

Circumstances when working from home/alternative location should not be considered

12 Working from home/alternative location must not be approved if medical opinion determines that the person is unfit for work.

Consideration of requests

13 There should be mutually agreed objectives for the work to be undertaken at the alternative location and clear criteria for assessing the success or outcomes of the arrangements.

14 The following factors need to be taken into account when considering requests for working from home/alternative location:

- suitability of the task or activity for working from home/alternative location;
- potential to set clear tasks/deliverables for the activities to be undertaken from home/alternative location;
- extent to which the staff member's working from home/alternative location may impact the performance of a team or of work with partner organizations, etc.;
- adequacy of communication and interaction when the staff member is working at home/alternative location; and
- assurance of security and confidentiality of information stored or accessed at the home/alternative location.

FLEXIBLE WORKING HOURS

1 Traditionally, organizations work with fixed schedules of operation and working hours. Staff members are expected to be at the office during the posted hours to permit supervision by their managers, to participate in meetings and to be on call for any work needs. At the same time, professional and managerial staff members often are expected to work beyond the posted hours.

2 This structured schedule poses a number of problems for both staff and management. Those working fixed hours deal with the constant stress of trying to arrive at, or leave, work on time if they are facing such problems as rush hour traffic delays or the need to care for infants, organize school transportation for children or meet other family obligations outside normal working hours. These difficulties in adhering to a structured schedule also lead to:

- disruptions and inefficient time planning, or
- lost opportunities for career development (e.g. when regular working hours conflict with available training courses).

The case for flexible working hours

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3 CGIAR Center staff members are highly committed and typically work much longer than formally required. Nevertheless, many might be more efficient and effective if they modify their working hours to accommodate work, study and family commitments.

4 By the same token, Centers may find that fixed hours do not always synchronize with their global concerns. As international research organizations, Centers often must function well beyond eight-hour days. They need to communicate with partners in distant time zones or to provide services to scientists who need round-the-clock monitoring of laboratory studies.

5 Flexible working hours is an effective way to meet these concerns. With flexible working hours, a Center usually establishes a set of core hours when all staff must be at the office to attend meetings, undertake joint work with other staff and be on call for their input.

6 The Center then allows **flexibility** by expanding the hours at which staff may arrive at the beginning of the day and leave at the end of the day. In some cases, the total number of hours during which the office is open and services provided is extended, providing longer periods of public access or support for scientists who must work outside normal hours.

7 Determining eligibility for staff members to practice flexible working hours may depend on their roles. Cross-training may be needed to ensure that all essential functions are fulfilled throughout the work day. Good communication between supervisors and staff is important for identifying and resolving concerns that arise from the flexible working hours.

8 Flexible working hours and other flexible arrangements require managers to focus on evaluating staff outputs, rather than observation of work patterns.

ALERT

Question your workplace practices.

- ✓ does your workplace (supervisors and colleagues) evaluate staff members on their work outputs and demonstrated competencies? Or does it place more emphasis on being seen to work long hours?
- ✓ do flexible work practices seem non-viable because the workplace is reactive, rather than having well-planned operations?

DEVELOPING A POLICY FRAMEWORK FOR FLEXIBLE WORKING HOURS

9 The development of detailed practices for implementing a flexible working hours policy would normally be guided by the following basic principles.

Access to flexible working hours

10 Unless there are overwhelming reasons to the contrary, e.g. where staff members need to provide (or receive) direct supervision or are needed to provide essential services, all staff should have access to flexible working hours.

Focus of flexibility

11 Flexibility of hours should be provided at the beginning and end of the day and during the lunch break.

12 Center managers should determine earliest start times and latest finish times according to local circumstances. The earliest start and latest finish times can vary among duty stations within the same country.

Core times

13 Center managers should set core times when all staff should be on duty. For example, core times might consist of two hours in the morning and two hours in the afternoon with two hours of flexibility during the lunch period. However these periods should be determined by the individual Center and location, noting that the periods might differ in locations where extreme climatic conditions prevail.

Limits

14 The maximum excess or deficit of hours that can be worked should be specified (e.g. limited to 10 hours in any four-week period).

Operational issues

15 Staff and their managers should communicate pro-actively to ensure that staff members working flexible hours deliver the necessary outputs or services.

16 A staff member may request time off during core time, exchanging those hours with their accumulated surpluses of time worked. Such a request would require approval of the relevant manager.

17 All routine meetings should be scheduled during core hours. These meetings should neither start before, nor extend later, than core hours. Failure to meet this requirement by the meeting organizer undermines the Center's flexible working hours philosophy.

18 Conversely, staff must recognize that certain meetings cannot be contained within core hours and require attendance outside core hours. Examples of these include major planning or review meetings, staff retreats and major presentations. Required attendance at these functions overrides general approvals for flexible working hours.

19 Managers should appraise performance based on output and demonstrated competencies, rather than observation of working patterns.

Record keeping

20 Employees shall keep a written record of the hours worked, indicating accumulation of excesses and deficits of working time.

EXAMPLE OF FLEXIBLE WORKING HOURS PRACTICE

21 A model set of administrative arrangements for flexible working hours appears in Tips and Tools. Note that these arrangements are intended only to be a model rather than a comprehensive plan. We recommend that they not be adopted until the Center has checked every paragraph in detail for acceptability and feasibility. There may be important local considerations not reflected in this model that should be incorporated into the final arrangements.

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COMPRESSED WORK SCHEDULES

1 A compressed work schedule is a working arrangement through which a staff member works the required weekly hours (e.g. 40 hours per week) but instead of spreading those hours over a traditional five-day week:

- may work the weekly 40 hours during four days (often called a four-day week); or
- may work the fortnightly 80 hours during nine days (often called a nine-day fortnight); or
- may work some other compressed schedule that delivers the required number of hours' work in less than a conventional week.

Thus the staff member can plan to take a regular day off every week/fortnight, or a regular half-day off every week, etc.

2 Unless there are overwhelming reasons to the contrary (e.g. supervision, essential service delivery, workplace safety) all staff should have access to compressed work schedules. It also should be noted that, as with other flexible workplace practices, a compressed work schedule is not necessarily ongoing. A compressed work schedule can be established to accommodate the particular circumstances of a staff member for a particular time, e.g. 6-12 months.

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Potential benefits of compressed work schedules

3 Compressed work schedules offer a number of potential benefits to staff members, including:

- providing extra time to spend on studies or professional development;
- providing extra time to spend with children, parents, community, etc.;
- reducing costs for childcare, transportation or other daily work-related expenses; and
- reducing commuting time.

Possible drawbacks of compressed work schedules

4 The potential problems that may arise with compressed work schedules include:

- increased stress in some roles, due to spending longer hours or days in the workplace and, consequently, increased risk of burnout;
- lack of supervision for some hours of the working day; and
- possible reduction in personal productivity or customer service as a consequence of increased stress or burnout.

5 Specific administrative arrangements for payroll, leave and holidays may also need to be established by the Center's HR group.

DEVELOPING A POLICY FRAMEWORK FOR IMPLEMENTING COMPRESSED WORK SCHEDULE ARRANGEMENTS

6 Developing detailed practices for implementing a compressed work schedule policy is similar to developing flexible working hours. Thus it would normally be guided by the following basic principles.

Access to compressed work schedules

7 Unless there are overwhelming reasons to the contrary (e.g. supervision, essential service delivery, workplace safety), all staff should have access to compressed work schedules.

Focus of flexibility

8 Flexibility should be provided over a period of a week or a fortnight. The staff member's day off (or half-day off) can be required on the same day each week/fortnight, if this is necessary for scheduling work across teams.

Operational issues

9 Staff members and their managers should communicate pro-actively to ensure that necessary work outputs or services are delivered when staff members are working with compressed work schedules.

10 Managers should appraise performance based on output and required competencies, rather than observation of working patterns.

Other issues

11 Centers need to determine how to deal with paid holidays that fall on a staff member's day (or part-day) off.

FLEXIBLE YEARLY PERIODS

1 A flexible yearly period is a working arrangement that allows staff members to:

- choose to work on one or more days during the year that are designated public holidays (e.g. Christmas Day or Easter Friday), then
- take the “holiday equivalent” period of (paid) leave on other days during the year.

This can be a particularly useful option to help Centers better accommodate religious minorities.

2 The staff member can, for example, add the holiday-equivalent leave described above to her/his annual holiday leave entitlement and take an extended period of holiday leave.

Potential benefits of flexible yearly periods

3 Flexible yearly periods offer a number of potential benefits. For instance, they can:

- avoid a situation in which a staff member is obliged to take a religion-based holiday that is irrelevant to her/his personal beliefs;
- provide the opportunity for the staff member to take leave for religious observances that are not accommodated by the Center’s official holidays, without having to use her/his personal leave entitlement; or
- extend the staff member’s total period of leave for annual holidays.

Possible drawbacks to flexible yearly periods

4 The potential problems of flexible yearly periods include:

- the availability of work on public holidays;
- problems of access to buildings, security, workplace safety, etc.;
- lack of supervision.

5 Administration of payroll, leave and holidays may also become slightly more complicated.

DEVELOPING A POLICY FRAMEWORK FOR IMPLEMENTING FLEXIBLE YEARLY PERIODS

6 Developing detailed practices for implementing a policy for flexible yearly periods would be similar to developing flexible working hours. Thus it would normally be guided by the following basic principles.

Access to flexible yearly periods

7 Unless there are overwhelming reasons to the contrary (e.g. supervision, essential service delivery), all staff should have access to flexible yearly periods.

Focus of flexibility

8 Flexibility ideally should be unlimited. Staff should be able to elect to work on any day that is a designated public holiday.

9 In practice this may not always be feasible because of problems of lack of available work on public holidays, problems of access to buildings, security, workplace safety, etc., or lack of supervision.

10 However if the Center has a flexi-place policy that enables staff to work from home, this option may overcome some of the potential problems.

Operational issues

11 Staff members and their managers should have a clear agreement about the work that is to be undertaken on the holiday/s concerned. This agreement forms the basis on which the manager can assess whether the “work-on-holidays” arrangements are productive and whether the arrangements should continue.

PART-TIME EMPLOYMENT

- 1** Centers should consider the option of part-time positions (or, possibly, shared positions). Not all positions require a single, full-time staff member for the work to be performed effectively. Some highly qualified and fully committed individuals may prefer a less-than-full-time position during some periods in their careers, in order to meet personal and family obligations (e.g. advanced education, child care, elder care).
- 2** Several options are available and have been implemented in Centers. Positions can be established on almost any basis, for example one-half (normal) time, two-thirds time or three-quarters time. Just as with full-time positions, part-time positions should have defined expectations of time commitments and schedules (e.g. for office, travel). They also should have clear and realistic work-plans against which performance can be evaluated.
- 3** The package of leave and other benefits should be pro-rated according to the time commitment, possibly maintaining full medical insurance benefits if this option exists with the relevant insurer.
- 4** All positions within the Center should be regarded as potentially suitable for part-time. The approach should be ‘why not?’ rather than ‘why?’ Applications to work part-time should be considered primarily on feasibility: what work will continue to be done, what work will no longer be done and how can that shortfall be met?
- 5** It is also important to recognize that, where the initiative for creating a part-time position comes from a staff member, the part-time arrangements may not necessarily be ongoing. They may only be needed for limited periods during the staff member’s career, e.g. up to two years.
- 6** As with other flexible working arrangements, it might be desirable to establish a pilot (e.g. six months) to test the viability of a part-time arrangement. There should be agreed criteria for evaluating the pilot’s success.
- 7** Unlike other flexible working practices, part-time working arrangements usually cannot be reversed at short notice. This is particularly the case when another staff member has been recruited to handle the activities off-loaded by the staff member who transferred to part-time employment.

DEVELOPING A POLICY FRAMEWORK FOR IMPLEMENTING PART-TIME EMPLOYMENT ARRANGEMENTS

8 The following basic principles would normally guide the development of part-time employment arrangements.

Access to part-time employment

9 All positions within the Center should be regarded as potentially suitable for part-time. Any staff member considering this option must be fully briefed by HR about the implications for salary and benefits.

When to approve part-time employment

10 Workloads of part-time positions should be carefully examined by both management and the staff member to ensure that conversion from full-time to part-time employment is accompanied by a corresponding reduction in workload. It is not unheard of for staff members who have made this transition to discover that their ostensibly part-time job has, over time, regained its original (full-time) workload and that the only change is they are being paid part-time salary to carry out a full-time job.

11 Part-time staff should be appraised on output and demonstration of required competencies rather than on work patterns.

12 Centers need to ensure that part-time working arrangements do not block the staff member's career development, particularly in relation to opportunities for training and development, consideration of promotion and applications to transfer to full-time positions.

When not to approve part-time employment

13 If the current post of the staff member is not suitable for part-time working, Center managers should be pro-active in seeking an alternative post that matches the individual's skills and likely career development.

14 Consideration can also be given to establishing a register of those seeking a partner with whom to job share. This can facilitate a staff member converting from full-time to part-time employment in a position that requires full-time hours per week.

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SHARED POSITIONS

1 Centers can establish arrangements for two people to share one full-time position. This arrangement can be used to:

- retain staff members wishing to reduce their total work hours due to professional or personal commitments,
- recruit highly-qualified candidates who have other professional work obligations that preclude their taking a full-time position, or
- provide spouse employment if both members of the couple have an appropriate skill mix.

2 When creating job-share arrangements, a Center may wish to set up arrangements so that during a specified period each week, both individuals are at work simultaneously. This facilitates hand-over of activity from one to the other. In some cases, this may require that the hours of the position be extended to accommodate the overlap period. For example, if extending the hours by 20 percent, the arrangement would be described as a “120 percent” position.

3 Shared positions have worked successfully at all levels of staff across the CGIAR, from shared secretarial positions to co-leadership of major programs. To work effectively, such arrangements require;

- careful clarification of the division of labor and coordination of time schedules,
- effective management to ensure that the organization’s needs are covered at all times, and
- good communication among the job-sharing partners, their supervisors and their subordinates.

4 Well-managed shared positions often show significant organizational advantages – a wider skill mix, higher energy, higher morale and more flexibility to respond in crisis situations.

5 Job sharing should be considered both at the recruitment stage and in response to requests from staff.

DEVELOPING A POLICY FRAMEWORK FOR IMPLEMENTING SHARED POSITION ARRANGEMENTS

6 The following basic principles would normally guide the development of arrangements for shared positions.

Access to job-share employment

7 All positions within the Center should be regarded as potentially suitable for job sharing. The approach should be “why not?” rather than “why?”. All applications from staff to job share should be considered in terms of the feasibility of the proposed arrangements.

When job-share arrangements are approved

8 Two individuals may share a full-time (or 120 percent) position with the agreement of the supervisor. A joint work plan should be developed to ensure that all responsibilities of the position are fully covered. Care should be taken to scrutinize and agree to handover arrangements between job-sharing staff members.

9 Job-share positions should be carefully examined for workload to ensure that neither partner has undue stress.

10 Job-share workers should be appraised on their output according to the agreed work plan. In some circumstances, the appraisal (or parts of it) may need to be undertaken with both job sharers jointly, particularly when assessing the overall effectiveness of the job (in meeting service delivery needs or project outputs).

When job-share arrangements are not possible

11 If the current post of a staff member seeking a job-share arrangement is not suitable for job sharing, Center managers should pro-actively seek an alternative post that is an appropriate match for the individual’s skills and likely career development.

12 If demand warrants, Center managers should establish a register of those seeking a partner with whom to job share.

TIPS AND TOOLS: MODEL POLICY

1 <Center> recognizes the strategic importance of diversity and that a diverse staff will include staff members at various stages of their life cycles. <Center> is committed to providing a work environment that is sufficiently flexible to accommodate diverse life-cycle challenges, thus ensuring high performance, long term productivity and well-being of staff.

2 <Center> has established a number of policies and practices that provide flexibility in establishing work locations, the number of hours, weeks or months worked each year and in transferring from full-time to other work arrangements. Specifically <Center> is prepared to consider options for staff members, either for a specific period or on an on-going basis, to:

- ✓ work from an alternative location to their normal <Center> location;
- ✓ work within a flexible working hours system;
- ✓ work compressed schedules, i.e. alternatives to working a traditional five-day week;
- ✓ work days that are designated as holidays and take the equivalent number of days as paid leave on other days during the year;
- ✓ transfer from full-time to part-time work;
- ✓ fill jobs on a job-share basis.

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Staff may request consideration of a combination of these options.

3 As a general principle, the above options will be considered where they do not impair <Center> long-term productivity. Provided this requirement is met, requests for alternative work locations and/or for flexible working hours, days or months will be considered primarily in terms of their feasibility. Supervisors are required to recognize and respect this principle when considering staff requests for flexibility. When appropriate, flexible working arrangements for individuals or groups may be introduced on a pilot basis, with on-going arrangements decided in light of the results of the pilot exercise.

4 Staff members are encouraged to take advantage of these policies and practices when they may assist in achieving a better balance between work commitments and their personal, family, community or professional commitments.

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MODEL ADMINISTRATIVE ARRANGEMENT: FLEXIBLE WORKING HOURS

The following guidelines are intended only to be a model rather than a firm and comprehensive plan. We recommend that they not be adopted until the Center has checked every paragraph in detail for acceptability and feasibility. There may be important local considerations not reflected in this model that should be incorporated into the final arrangements.

Centers may add these administrative arrangements to their basic policy statement in their Personnel Policy Manual (preferably as an appendix) or they may issue administrative instructions in the form of a circular to staff or intranet posting at the duty station concerned. Either is acceptable.

ADMINISTRATIVE ARRANGEMENTS: FLEXI-PLACE (WORKING FROM HOME/ALTERNATIVE LOCATION)

- 1** Subject to the agreement of their supervisor, and with the approval of the Regional Director (or equivalent), staff members may elect to work for a specific period from home or an alternative location to the <Center> site, provided that:
 - ✓ the work proposed for this period can be undertaken effectively from home/alternative location, and
 - ✓ working from home/alternative location will not impair the staff members' other work obligations, particularly communication/interaction with colleagues and partners.
- 2** Working from home/alternative location may be considered when:
 - ✓ the nature of the task requires considerable concentration in an environment that will allow uninterrupted work;
 - ✓ a staff member needs to accommodate a short-term personal/family need;
 - ✓ a staff member needs to accommodate a long-term personal/family need;
 - ✓ a staff member is physically unable to get to work, e.g. because of accident or injury (but nevertheless is medically fit for work);
 - ✓ a staff member is undertaking a return-to-work program following medical treatment; and
 - ✓ a staff member's absence from her/his normal workplace (except in the case of accident/injury or return-to-work program) will not unduly affect productivity.
- 3** Working from home/alternative location will not be approved if medical opinion determines that the person is unfit for work.
- 4** Several options exist for working from home/alternative location.

These include:

- ✓ working at home/alternative location for an agreed part of every day for a specified period;
- ✓ working at home/alternative location all day for a specified period; and
- ✓ working at home/alternative location for an agreed part of each week on an ongoing basis.

Typically the specified period will be a number of days or weeks as appropriate. Consideration will also be given to other options, depending on feasibility and reason/s for the request.

5 The needs of the Center and the service provided will be the determining factor in any agreement to working from home/alternative location. Objectives for the work to be undertaken from home/alternative location must be mutually agreed between the staff member and her/his supervisor. Working arrangements must be robust, allow for measurable targets to be set and for regular feedback on performance to occur. There shall also be clear criteria established for reviewing the effectiveness of the arrangements.

6 Particular attention will be focused on availability of adequate communication with the staff member at home/alternative location and the implications for quality of interaction with team colleagues or partners. Thus, when the staff member is working from home or an alternate location:

- ✓ in the same time zone as her/his usual site – it should be possible for <Center> management, colleagues and partners to contact the staff member at any time during agreed working hours; or
- ✓ in a different time zone from her/his usual site, it should be possible for <Center> management, colleagues and partners to contact the staff member at any time during agreed working hours at the alternative location.

7 If the period of working from home/alternative location exceeds two weeks, the effectiveness of the arrangement will be monitored periodically. An agreement to review and evaluate the arrangement must detail the date for such a review and the subjects that will be covered in the review/s.

8 Security and confidentiality rules (cross-refer to section in Center's personnel management manual or equivalent dealing with security and confidentiality), continue to apply to all business conducted on behalf of <Center>, irrespective of the staff member's location. Breaches will be dealt with under disciplinary rules or other relevant <Center> policies and procedures.

9 Where good reason exists, arrangements for working from home/alternative location may be terminated at any time by the Regional Director (or equivalent), divisional head, supervisor or the staff member.

IMPLEMENTATION

Staff member

10 Any staff member considering an arrangement to work from home/alternative location should discuss the proposal with:

- ✓ colleagues likely to be affected, and
- ✓ relevant supervisor(s)

In order to reach consensus that the proposed arrangements will not impede workgroup effectiveness or relationships with partners.

Staff member and supervisor/s

11 The staff member and line supervisor will consider:

- ✓ the nature of the staff member's work and its suitability for being undertaken from home/alternative location;
- ✓ the staff member's demonstrated ability to work without direct supervision; and
- ✓ the staff member's demonstrated ability to meet deadlines (track record).

12 If both parties agree that the proposal to work from home/alternative location appears feasible, they will work jointly to prepare a recommendation for management's approval. The recommendation will address all of the following issues:

- ✓ the proposed period for working from home/alternative location;
- ✓ the project/s to be undertaken and the specific outputs from the period spent working from home/alternative location;
- ✓ the reason/s for the proposal;
- ✓ their assessment of the suitability of undertaking the work from home/alternative location;
- ✓ the supervisor's endorsement that the staff member is likely to be effective working from home/alternative location;
- ✓ risk implications for colleagues/teams/partners – particularly those managed by the staff member (e.g. coordination difficulties, communications difficulties);
- ✓ proposed solutions for any adverse implications (e.g. message-taking, fax, phone, e-mail);
- ✓ communication details (e.g. telephone numbers, contactable hours);
- ✓ relevant health and safety issues for Center and staff member;
- ✓ security and confidentiality issues; and
- ✓ arrangements for periodic review and evaluation of arrangements and work progress against agreed targets (if exceeding 2 weeks).

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Regional Director/ Director (or equivalent)

13 The decision on whether or not to allow working from home will rest with the respective Regional Director (or equivalent). The Regional Director must be satisfied with the arrangements agreed between the staff member and her/his supervisor.

14 The Regional Director will forward a copy of the approved arrangements to the head of HR, who will provide a quarterly summary of such arrangements to the Management Committee.

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MODEL ADMINISTRATIVE ARRANGEMENT: FLEXI-PLACE

The following guidelines are intended only to be a model rather than a firm and comprehensive plan. We recommend that they not be adopted until the Center has checked every paragraph in detail for acceptability and feasibility. There may be important local considerations not reflected in this model that should be incorporated into the final arrangements.

Centers may add these administrative arrangements to their basic policy statement in their Personnel Policy Manual (preferably as an appendix) or they may issue administrative instructions in the form of a circular to staff or intranet posting at the duty station concerned. Either is acceptable.

ADMINISTRATIVE ARRANGEMENTS: FLEXI-PLACE (WORKING FROM HOME/ALTERNATIVE LOCATION)

- 1** Subject to the agreement of their supervisor, and with the approval of the Regional Director (or equivalent), staff members may elect to work for a specific period from home or an alternative location to the <Center> site, provided that:
 - ✓ the work proposed for this period can be undertaken effectively from home/alternative location, and
 - ✓ working from home/alternative location will not impair the staff members' other work obligations, particularly communication/interaction with colleagues and partners.
- 2** Working from home/alternative location may be considered when:
 - ✓ the nature of the task requires considerable concentration in an environment that will allow uninterrupted work;
 - ✓ a staff member needs to accommodate a short-term personal/family need;
 - ✓ a staff member needs to accommodate a long-term personal/family need;
 - ✓ a staff member is physically unable to get to work, e.g. because of accident or injury (but nevertheless is medically fit for work);
 - ✓ a staff member is undertaking a return-to-work program following medical treatment; and
 - ✓ a staff member's absence from her/his normal workplace (except in the case of accident/injury or return-to-work program) will not unduly affect productivity.
- 3** Working from home/alternative location will not be approved if medical opinion determines that the person is unfit for work.

- 4** Several options exist for working from home/alternative location. These include:
- ✓ working at home/alternative location for an agreed part of every day for a specified period;
 - ✓ working at home/alternative location all day for a specified period; and
 - ✓ working at home/alternative location for an agreed part of each week on an ongoing basis.

Typically the specified period will be a number of days or weeks as appropriate. Consideration will also be given to other options, depending on feasibility and reason/s for the request.

5 The needs of the Center and the service provided will be the determining factor in any agreement to working from home/alternative location. Objectives for the work to be undertaken from home/alternative location must be mutually agreed between the staff member and her/his supervisor. Working arrangements must be robust, allow for measurable targets to be set and for regular feedback on performance to occur. There shall also be clear criteria established for reviewing the effectiveness of the arrangements.

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7 If the period of working from home/alternative location exceeds two weeks, the effectiveness of the arrangement will be monitored periodically. An agreement to review and evaluate the arrangement must detail the date for such a review and the subjects that will be covered in the review/s.

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- ✓ the reason/s for the proposal;
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TIPS FOR WORKING AT HOME

The following issues are presented as a checklist for staff considering the option of working from home. Many of them also apply to working from other alternative locations. The main distinction is that working from home is more likely to be an ongoing arrangement than working from other alternative locations, consequently more effort needs to be invested in making it a viable alternative.

- ✓ Create a proper workspace. Think about lighting, ventilation, quality of office furniture for working long periods. If possible, get a workplace health and safety (OHS) inspection of your workspace.
- ✓ Put a good communication system in place. Determine: how your supervisor/colleagues should contact you – e-mail, land-line, mobile phone, etc. – and when your supervisor/colleagues can contact you – throughout the day or in specially designated time bands?
- ✓ Think about security of information. If you are working with sensitive or confidential documents, how will you ensure they are secure in your home? Do you have proper password protection? Do you have proper (and secure) back-up for your electronic files, in case of a home burglary and loss of your computer?
- ✓ Take regular exercise breaks! When you don't have scheduled office meetings with colleagues or other office activities, it's all too easy to find yourself working at a keyboard for longer periods than are healthy for you.
- ✓ Will you have special technological needs, e.g. special e-mail access or online access to databases? How will these needs be met, by whom and at whose cost? Who is going to pay for local phone calls, long-distance calls and Internet access?
- ✓ Will working from home affects your home insurance in any way?
- ✓ If you are working from home for long periods, how are you going to maintain informal interaction with your supervisor/s and colleagues? Develop a strategy and implement it meticulously – don't become invisible!
- ✓ Last – and most important – do you and your supervisor have a clear and shared understanding of precisely what activities you will be carrying out

at home? Do your team colleagues need to know what you will be doing?
Have you told them?

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